THE

ATHEIST'S REWARD:

OR, A

Call from Heaven,

On JULY the 24th, 1786.

SHEWING,

How a profane young 'Squire was struck dead by Thunder and Lightning, for Blasphemy against God.

Two of his companions died soon after: Another fell into a Trance, in which he saw the Torments of the Wicked, and the joys of the Blessed: He related the same to several Divines, desiring that it might be published as a warning to other wicked persons.

TO WHICH IS ANNEXED,

An account of the apparition of the Ghost of Major George Sydenham, (late of Dulverton, in the County of Somerset) to Captain William Dyke, (late of Skilgate, in the County of Somerset also, and now likewise deceased:)—As it is related by a worthy and learned Gentleman, called Doctor Thomas Dyke, a near Kinsman of the Captain's.

PRINTED IN THE YEAR 1788.

The Atheiſt's Reward, &c.

ONE Samuel Smith, eſq; ſon of ſir John Smith, Bart. lived in the County of Oxford who being the only child that his parents enjoyed; they put him to St. John's College, in the univerſity of Oxford, in order to get him a good education: But as we find it is the way of many youths in this age to follow the ways and temptations of the devil, more than to regard the voice of God, ſo he betook himſelf to all manner of vice, as curſing, ſwearing, drinking, whoring and ſabbath breaking, inſomuch, that in a ſhort time he broke his aged mother's heart. But regarding not his mother's death, he went one day to his father, ſwearing, ſays he, give me money to fulfil my youthful deſires, for I'll not loſe one moments pleaſure in this world, if my ſoul ſhould go to hell for ever. His father anſwer'd him, I will give you no money, till I know what uſe you made of the laſt I gave you, therefore think of God, and do not break my heart as thou haſt done thy aged mother's. Then ſays he, ſince you tell me ſo, abroad I will go a-hunting. There was a voice heard to ſay, hunt not God, for he will not be hunted by man. He anſwered, ſaying, Who is that ſo boldly calleth to me? the voice reply'd, Hear, the Lord Je-

ſus Chriſt died for ſinners. But he regarding not the voice, ſaid to his man, Go fetch me my horſe, for this day I will ride a-hunting. Then ſending for three of his companions, named William Jones, John Walker and Luke Green, Eſq; and they aſking him when they came, what they were going to do? he anſwered, they were going to hunt G. They all mounted upon their horſes, and riding over St. Giles's fields, a voice was heard to ſay, Repent with ſpeed leſt ye periſh before ye return. But they regarded not the heavenly call, but riding about the fields, ſaying, where is he that calleth himſelf God? Then preſently there appeared before them a bleſſed angel, who ſaid, God is your Father, and ſits in heaven above. Then reply'd Squire Smith, Is God above me who am heir to ten thouſand a-year? And taking a piſtol from before him, he fired it up in the air, ſwearing that he would fetch G. out of his throne. He had no ſooner uttered theſe blaſphemous words, but ſeveral dreadful claps of thunder and lightning were heard and ſeen in a terrible manner, and behold he was immediately ſhatter'd to pieces. Then the angel appear'd again to the other three, ſaying, Repent, leſt ye alſo periſh as you have ſeen your companion. They immediately returned home and went to prayers, and in an hour's time two of the three died, but Mr. Jones fell in a trance, in which he lay three days and three nights, when coming to himſelf he declared the torments of hell, and the inexpreſſible joys of

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heaven, and ſending for the Rev'd. Dr. Bonne, Dr. Nicholas, Dr. Wilſon, and Dr. Walker, belonging to St. John's College in Oxford, he deſired them that they would be pleas'd to write down what he had to declare that it might be publiſhed around the country, for the ſake of young men and all Chriſtian families.——

Thus he began, in the firſt time of my falling into a trance, I travelled thro' a dark and ſmokey valley, where I was almoſt choak'd with the ſmell of fire and brimſtone; at the end of it I beheld a dreadful fiery lake, where I ſaw ſeveral wretched ſinners ſwimming in burning brimſtone; and one of the fiends went to pull me into his den, upon which my ſoul trembled, and I endeavoured to ſay the Lord's prayer; then the dark cloud immediately vaniſh'd, and an angel appeared before me all in white, and I beheld the Sun, Moon, and ſeven Stars, guided by twelve angels, four of them with trumpets in their hands, four with broad ſeals, and four with rolls; and he took me up and ſhewed me the gates of heaven, where I beheld ſeveral of my neighbours that had been righteous perſons, ſitting and ſinging Hallelujahs to the heavenly king.

I would fain have entered the gates of heaven, but they would not let me in, ſaying you muſt return from whence you came, and tell your idle companions, what you have ſeen concerning the torments of hell, and the inexpreſſible joys of heaven. Then I aſk'd the meaning of the four rolls, he told me, they

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were the four rolls of the world, to write all ſinners names in at the Day of Judgement: And I aſk'd the meaning of the four ſeals, he told me they were the four ſeals of God and none could enter into heaven, but them who had thoſe ſeals upon them; then I aſk'd the meaning of the four trumpets? he told me they were the four meſſengers of God, to blow at the four quarters of the world, when the dead ſhall ariſe from the bottom of the ſeas, and from the deepeſt parts of the earth, and ſhall appear in their own ſhapes at the day of Judgement, before our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt. With theſe ſurpriſing words I came to myſelf again. He immediately fell down to prayer and ſoon departed this life.

The Noted Story of the Major who returned from Death, to tell the Captain whether there was a God or not.

SHortly after the major's death, the doctor was deſired to come to the houſe to take care of a child that was ſick there, and in his way thither he called on the captain, who was very willing to wait on him to the place, becauſe he muſt, as he ſaid, have gone thither that night, tho' he had not met with ſo encouraging an opportunity. After their arrival at the houſe, and the civility of the people ſhewn them in that entertainment, they were ſeaſonably conducted to their lodging, which they deſired might be together in the ſame bed:

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Where after they had lain a while, the captain knock't, and bids the ſervant bring him two of the largeſt and higheſt candles lighted, which he could get: Whereupon the doctor enquires what he meant by this? The captain anſwers, "You know couſin, what diſputes my major and I had touching the being of a God, and the immortality of the ſoul, in which points we could never yet be reſolved, tho' we ſo much deſired it. And therefore it was at length fully agreed between us, that he of us who died firſt, ſhould the third night after his funeral, between the hours of twelve and one, come to the little houſe which is here in the garden, and there give a full account to the ſurvivor touching theſe matters, who ſhould be ſure to be preſent there at the ſet time, and ſo receive a full ſatisfaction. And this, ſays the captain, is the very night, and I am come on purpoſe to fulfil my promiſe." The doctor diſſwaded him, minding him of the danger of following ſtrange counſels, for which he could have no warrant; and that the devil might by ſome cunning device make ſuch an advantage of this attempt, as might work his utter ruin. The captain replies, "That he had ſolemnly engaged, and that nothing ſhould diſcourage him. And adds, that if the doctor would wake a while with him, he would thank him, if not, he might compoſe himſelf to reſt: but for his own part, he was reſolved to watch, that he might be ſure to be preſent at the hour appointed." To that purpoſe he ſets his watch by

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him, and as ſoon as he perceived by it, that it was half an hour paſt 11, he riſes, and taking a candle in each hand, goes out by a back-door, of which he had before got the key, and walks into the garden houſe, where he continued two hours and an half, and at his return declared, That he neither ſaw nor heard any thing more than what was uſual. But I know, ſaid he, that my major would ſurely have come; had he been able.

About ſix weeks after, the captain rides to Eaton, to place his ſon a ſcholar there, and the doctor went thither with him; they lodged there at an inn, the ſign whereof was the Chriſtopher, and tarried two or three nights, not lying together now as before at Dulverton, but in two ſeveral chambers. The morning before they went from thence the captain ſtayed in his chamber longer than he was wont to do, before he called for the doctor, at length he comes to the doctor, but in a viſage and form much differing from himſelf, his hair and eyes ſtaring, and his whole body ſhaking and trembling: Whereat the doctor wondring, preſently demanded what is the matter, captain? The captain replies, I have ſeen my major. At which the doctor ſeeming to ſmile, the captain confirms it, if ever I ſaw him in my life, I ſaw him but now: And then he related to the doctor what had paſſed: "This morning after it was light ſome one came to my bed-ſide, and ſuddenly drawing back the curtains, calls captain, captain! (which was the term of familiarity that

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the major us'd to call the captain by,) to whom I reply'd, what, my major? to which he returns, I could not come at the time appointed, but I am now come to tell you that there is a God, and a very juſt and terrible one, and if you do not turn over a new leaf, (the very expreſſion, as by the doctor punctually remembred,) you ſhall find it ſo: The captain proceeded; on the table by, there lay a ſword, which the major had formerly given me, now after the apparition had walked a turn or two about the chamber, he took up the ſword, drew it, and finding it not ſo clean and bright as it ought, captain, captain, ſaid he, this ſword did not uſe to be kept after this manner, when it was mine: After which words he preſently diſappeared.

The captain was not only thoroughly perſuaded of what he had ſeen and heard, but was from that time obſerved to be very much affected with it: And the humour which before in him was briſk and jovial, was then ſtrangely altered, inſomuch as very little meat would paſs down with him at dinner, though at the taking leave of their friends, there was a very handſome treat provided: yea, it was obſerved, that what the captain had thus ſeen and heard, had a more laſting influence on him: and it was judged by thoſe who were well acquainted with his converſation, the remembrance of the paſſage ſtuck cloſe to him, and that thoſe words of his dead friend were frequently ſounding freſh in his ears, during the remainder of his life, which was about two years.

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